

THERE may be very little left in terms of Isthmian League honours for Wycombe Wanderers this season. But the way they comprehensively beat Amateur Cup semi-finalists Bishop's Stortford on Saturday suggested they can be a real force to be reckoned with in their remaining matches, notably the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup and Premier Midweek Floodlight League play-offs.

Make no mistake about it, Wanderers played well on Saturday, wrecking Stortford's unbeaten home run that has lasted all season. Yet they have played equally as well this term and ended up on the losing side. The enormous and deciding difference was in the finishing.

One up after seven minutes, Wycombe conceded a goal eight minutes later, but then tightened to considerably and never looked back.

The key to their emphatic triumph was the front runners, Kenny Swain certainly made a difference to the attack, his passing being his greatest asset. He laid on two goals to justify his selection in favour of Brian Langfield.

But it was the partnership of Keith Searle and Tony Horseman that was the turning point. These two, who scored 142 goals in 1971 and 75 the following year between them, tore the home defence apart.

Searle gave inexperienced centre half Martin Smith a severe lesson, while Horseman was sprinting around in search of goals like a 17-year-old. And Bishop's had no answer to it.

The two strikers can make the most of even a desperate clearance from their own defence with their uncanny heading ability. But when Larry Pritchard, Rob Williams and Johnny Hutchinson take control

'keeper Tony Wiseman's despairing dive.

Their lead didn't last long, however. From Stortford's first corner in the 15th minute, Wanderers paid the penalty for allowing Francis too much

not long before they scored again.

It came in the 35th minute and Tony Wiseman in the home goal was badly at fault. Referee Barnes awarded a free kick for Smith's clumsy challenge on

Horseman lurking nearby. "Bodger" was on the ball like a flash and took it past Wiseman before slotting home from a narrow angle. The confidence in which the goal was taken, demonstrated Wycombe's command.

Francis kept battling on alone upfront for the home side but Ian Rundle cancelled out the threat with a rugged performance at full back. At the other end, Stortford were in all sorts of trouble, firstly committing themselves far too early to the tackle and then hoping for off-side decisions. Time and again they raised their arms in vain appeals for offside, but they received little help from the linesman.

Swain soon worked his way through again and from a similar position to Horseman's goal, curled his final shot straight across the goal but wide of the far post.

Maskell's only worry in the later stage came from Scott who crossed the ball hard across goal but the 'keeper flung himself out to palm the ball away from the oncoming forwards.

It was a rare chance for the home side and they never really looked like getting back into the game throughout the second period. With this sort of performance the message for Slough Town and other opponents this season is clear — **BEWARE!**

STORTFORD: A. Wiseman, M. Davenport, R. Coombes, R. Mitchell, M. Smith, D. Lawrence, P. Laakey, D. Francis, J. Dear, B. Davidson (sub N. Bunker 79 mins.), P. Scott.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, I. Rundle, D. Bullock, J. Delaney, P. Birdseye, R. Williams, J. Hutchinson, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman, K. Searle, K. Swain, Sub A. Gane (not used.)

Referee: A. Barnes (Palmeres Green).

Half-time: 1-3.

Goalscorers: Wycombe — Pritchard (7), Hutchinson (29), Horseman 2 (35, 60), Searle (52). Stortford — Francis (15).

Bishop's Stortford 1, Wycombe Wanderers 5

Report by STUART EARP

of midfield, the effect is even greater — as Stortford found out to their cost.

Admittedly Wycombe's task would have been much more difficult had John Still, their fine centre half, been available. The Bishops were also missing goalkeeper Terry Moore, who made such an impression in Stortford's 1-0 win at Loukes Park earlier in the season.

At first, Wanderers were troubled by the home side's tactics of pumping the long ball upfield. Rob Williams almost let in John Dear with a poor pass-back in the third minute but his shot was too weak. Then Dennis Francis, their highly talented coloured forward, lashed a drive over the top.

Despite Friday's rain, the pitch had dried out completely and once again the bounce was unpredictable. However, Wycombe hardly ever let their opponents' tactics unsettle them. Their answer was to make themselves first and get to the ball before it hit the turf.

In the seventh minute they went ahead with a superb goal made by Searle and Horseman. "Bodger" sent Searle racing through the defence and Keith's measured pass was met by Pritchard, who took a couple of paces and fired the ball under

room. Paul Scott sent a firm cross to the far post which caught 'keeper John Maskell in two minds. Francis leaped up and sent a cracking header into the roof of the net with the visitors' defence static.

This type of set piece was causing concern to the Wycombe defence early on, with Dave Bullock taking some time to settle in again at centre back after his game in midfield last week. John Delaney, however, was in his most commanding form and thrived on Stortford's method of attack.

Johnny Hutchinson raced onto the scene with goal number two in the 29th minute. Although Alan Gane did not play his scheduled trial for Hereford United, he was substitute on Saturday to allow Hutchinson a place in midfield. "Hutch" responded with a neatly taken goal. Swain provided the pass and John outpaced two defenders and drove the ball home just inside a post. The two players involved in the goal changed roles a minute later, but Swain clipped the ball inches wide.

At this stage, Wycombe had regained the initiative after Stortford's early pressure and with Searle and Horseman beginning to dominate, it was

Searle, Stortford immediately formed a defensive wall inside their penalty area but left a large gap for Tony Horseman who bent his shot inside the post. Wiseman dived across but the ball slithered under his body.

Even though Stortford were getting nowhere with their long ball play they persisted in pumping the ball high upfield but again Delaney and Maskell, whose handling was impeccable, thwarted all their efforts.

The ten minutes into the new half again provided Wanderers with a crucial goal. This time Swain was the architect and his play demonstrated the difference in the front three compared with recent matches. Searle's pass put Swain through and although he overran the ball fractionally, he regained control near the by-line. Whereas many forwards would have tried a shot from a near impossible angle, Swain kept cool and delayed his cross just long enough for Searle to run into position and head the ball down and across the line.

A slack moment in the Wycombe defence allowed Scott a free chance with only Maskell to beat a few minutes later, but he sent his effort wide and on the hour, Wycombe made it 5-1.

Scott sent a suicidal pass back to his goalkeeper with